

The Key to Success

Yes it's me again with another monthly installment of **Wires'N Wood**. It was suggested that I show a few easy to learn guitar cords for new beginners. I decided to focus this month's column around the Key of C-major. I chose this key because the chords that make it up are all very similar in form. That is to say the shape that your hand takes as each chord is fingered is very similar to the others in this key. Also C-major is an excellent key to use as a foundation for learning to do runs and picking. I apologize if there is nothing here that would interest more advanced musicians however we all needed a little help in the beginning and as some of our members are just in the early stages of learning to play the guitar I feel obligated to try and do for them what others did for me. Keep checking in here each month, I promise that things will gradually advance to a more challenging stage in time.

But let us start at the beginning. Before setting about to learn to play the guitar, You might well consider, getting the neck set up. This means adjusting the clearance of the strings off the frets of your guitar. If the neck of your guitar is not set properly it will likely mean that you will have to press the strings down farther and harder to get good, solid contact with the finger board. This will result in the instrument being somewhere between difficult and painful to almost impossible to play. If the clearance is set to low some of the strings will make a buzzing noise when struck. Often when we buy our guitars they are not very well set up. This is a tricky procedure and I recommend that if you want to set the neck of your instrument, you get someone who really knows what he's doing to perform this task for you. I recommend Ron Flemming as he is a licensed luthier. Also He tells me that he'll do this for Westman Jammers for a **very** reasonable fee of only \$25. Believe me, it's worth it. Also be sure to tune your instrument properly before you begin. Never play an instrument that is tuned to a flat or sharp pitch.

Now your instrument is ready to play. Before we begin here are a few



tips. Get used to anchoring your right hand to the pick guard of the guitar with you pinky finger as illustrated. This will help you maintain a correct position and height for your strumming hand over



the strings and sound hole. It will also help you later on in finding the precise strings you wish to strike with the pick, when you learn to do your runs and picking. Work on developing the habit of anchoring your hand. Do not hold the pick too tightly. Hold it in the illustrated fashion with a medium grip. To hold too tightly would cause your wrist to be stiff. Remember your wrist performs most of the strumming action, not your arm.

Take the neck of your guitar in the cradle of your left hand, between the thumb and forefinger. Once again, do not grip it too tightly. Your forefinger should be sufficient to keep it from slipping from your grasp. To hold it tightly will only cause you unnecessary discomfort and may also result in you pulling back on the neck of the instrument and causing it to go sharp as you do so. Too tight a grip may also result in you not being able to move your fingers about as dexterously as you would like. If you're having any of these problems check that your grip is not too tight.

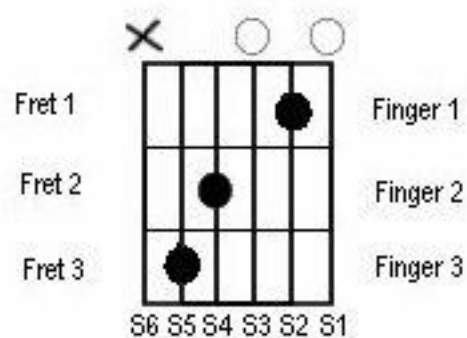


As you wrap your hand around the neck it is imperative that you have as much of your finger joints protruding above the edge of the lower side of your fret board. Please note the illustration once more. The more of your fingers that are visible over the lower edge of the neck of your guitar, the farther across the neck you can reach with them. Also this makes it possible to press straight down on the strings with your fingertips. Angling your fingers across the fret board while pressing strings may cause your fingertips to cover more strings than you intend to, resulting in an unpleasant or muffled sound rather than the chord you want to hear.

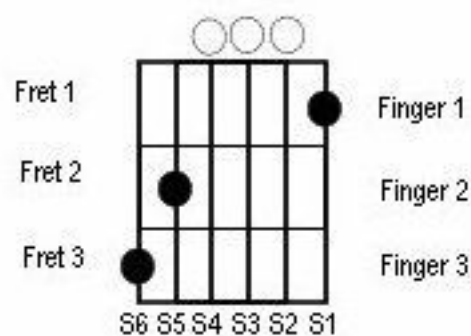
Finally, when holding down strings, position your fingertips **just behind** the next fret. Try to avoid pressing down the strings closer to the fret behind your fingers as this will likely result in a muffled note or possibly the sound of buzzing strings. Do not press down the strings directly over a fret as this will definitely cause the string in question to be muffled. Try and finger strings as close to the next fret, without covering it, as you can for the clearest sounding results.

Now here is the cord charts and illustrated fingerings to **C-major**, **G-7** & **F-major**, which are the chords that combine to make up the key of C.

C-major

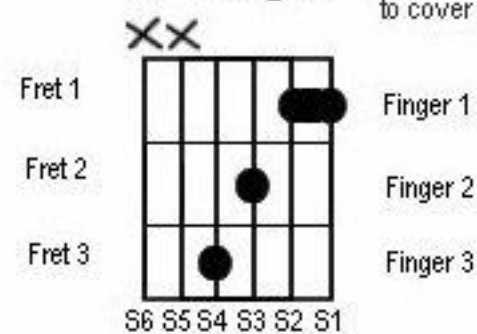


G-7



F-major

(Lay first finger down flat to cover strings 2 & 1.)



- = Fretted Note
- × = Muted (Do not Sound)
- = Open String (Sound)



Finally I must emphasize that I can not supply or implant a computer chip into your brain, making all of this instantly become natural to you. Even the guy who sold you your guitar would not promise you that. Learning to play any instrument takes time and practice... and practice.. and more practice.

Set a side 30 minutes to an hour a day, **every day** and divide this time up equally to practice each chord I've given you. Position your fingers to play the chord, and once you have it so it sounds right, strum it a few times and then release it. Then do it again. If the chord isn't sounding right recheck your fingering and keep your fingers at as close to a 90 degree angle to the fret board as you can and try again. **Do not excuse mistakes! Correct them.** After 10-20 minutes of practicing a cord, (depending on whether your practice lasts 30 minutes or an hour.) Move on to practicing the next chord and so on.

Oh sure it sounds tedious and boring and it's hard work but remember; Once you get these chords down pat you'll be able to make real music. Always keep your ultimate goal in mind and **DON'T GIVE UP!** Never forget that if you **REALLY WANT** to play guitar, you **CAN learn** to play guitar but you'll have to put in the work to do so.

Well, that's all I have for this month. I hope you find this article to be informative and useful. If you have any questions, corrections or suggestions for Wires'N Wood be sure to email me at eh Heath@mts.net or just grab-a-hold of me at the next Westman Jam. You can be sure that I'll be there and looking forward to seeing and **hearing** you. Remember: You **can** learn to play guitar, if you're willing to put in the effort to get the ball rolling. Bye for now.

Elger Heath
Amateur Editoralist